

STAFF and CENTERS

STAFF, W.P. CM2/c AND CENTERS J. P. were in A-28, forward air compressor compartment. Zed was about half set. When the ship rolled over, water and fuel oil entered. Two men, Harris, EM3/c and Blaylock F3/c, attempted to leave before the ship turned over and are believed lost. Staff and Centers broke the lock on door of linen store room. At first the door could not be opened as toweling, etc., had jammed against the door. As the door was opened slightly, water rushed in and moved toweling away from door permitting it to be opened. The door was closed and dogged down. The two men remained in the linen store room for a period of about 41 hours. They were finally taken out through a manhole opened by the rescue party into a void and out through a hole cut in the hull.

SUNDAY MORNING AT 0750 ON 7 DECEMBER 1941, I WAS IN THE CARPENTER SHOP WHEN THE GENERAL ALARM WAS SOUNDED. I IMMEDIATELY WENT ALONG THE STARBOARD SIDE OF THE THIRD DECK TO MY BATTLE STATION..

I FELT SEVERAL EXPLOSIONS ON THE WAY TO REPAIR II. WHEN I GOT TO REPAIR II I TOOK MY PHONES AND WENT TO GET A FLASHLIGHT BUT THEY WERE LOCKED UP SO I WENT ON DOWN TO A-28, THE FORWARD AIR COMPRESSOR ROOM, AND STARTED TO SET ZED. THERE WAS AN ELECTRICIAN'S MATE AND A FIREMAN ALSO, CENTERS J.P. MM2c AND MYSELF IN THE COMPARTMENT. WHEN THE LIGHTS WENT OUT THE FIREMAN AND THE ELECTRICIAN'S MATE STARTED TO GO OUT THE ZED HATCH WHICH HAD BEEN SET BY REPAIR II; THEY WERE YELLING AND SCREAMING. WATER AND FUEL OIL WERE COMING DOWN THE HATCH. I TRIED TO STOP THEM FROM OPENING THE HATCH, BUT COULDN'T.

THE NEXT THING WE KNEW WE WERE ALL UNDER WATER AND OIL. CENTERS AND I WERE THE ONLY ONES THAT CAME UP.

IT TOOK US SOME TIME IN THE DARK TO FIND OUT THAT WE WERE BACK IN A-28 AND THE SHIP HAD CAPSIZED.

WE THEN TRIED TO GET INTO THE LINEN STOREROOM. IT WAS ON THE STARBOARD SIDE AND WAS OUT OF THE WATER. A-28 WAS ABOUT HALF FULL OF OIL AND WATER. THE STOREROOM WAS LOCKED AND IT TOOK SEVERAL HOURS TO BEAT THE LOCK OFF WITH A WRENCH THAT WE FOUND ON THE AIR COMPRESSOR. WE COULD NOT GET INTO THE STOREROOM AS GEAR MUST HAVE WEDGED AGAINST THE DOOR.

WE TRIED TO GET INTO A SMALL STOREROOM WHICH WAS ON THE OVERHEAD, BUT IT WAS ALSO LOCKED AND WE COULD NOT GET INTO POSITION TO BEAT THE LOCK OFF.

ABOUT MONDAY NOON WE HEARD TAPPING AND WE ANSWERED THEM. AFTER SO LONG THEY WERE RIGHT OVERHEAD AND WE COULD HEAR THEM TALKING. WHEN THEY STARTED TO CUT INTO US IT LET OUT AIR AND WE WERE UNDER AIR PRESSURE, THE WATER CAME UP AS OUR AIR ESCAPED.

THE WATER CAME UP AND OUT THE HOLE THEY WERE CUTTING AND THEY LEFT. BUT WE STILL HAD ABOUT SIX INCHES OF AIR SPACE.

WE TRIED THE LINEN ROOM AGAIN AND IT GAVE A LITTLE. APPARENTLY THE WATER HAD CLEARED THE GEAR FROM THE DOOR, WE IN AND STARTED TAPPING AGAIN.

THE RESCUERS SOON GOT OUT TO US AGAIN, AND WE LEFT THE SHIP AT 0200 TUESDAY MORNING.

I WISH TO THANK THESE MEN FOR THEIR HARD WORK IN RESCUING US. KEENUM CBM, THOMAS SF1c AND HARRIS EM2c

WALT STAFF

DESCENT INTO DARKNESS RAYMER PG 22/23